

What Is Claimed Is:

1                   1. A method for upgrading a user environment, wherein the user  
2 environment has a product with a component operable to run at a low operating  
3 level and a high operating level, the component of the product being set to operate  
4 at the low operating level, the method comprising:  
5                   associating an upgrade key with the product, the upgrade key having  
6 permission instructions for the component of the product to operate at the high  
7 operating level; and  
8                   enabling the component of the product to operate at the high  
9 operating level in response to the upgrade key being associated with the product  
10 in order to upgrade the user environment.

1                   2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:  
2                   associating a security mechanism with the product, the security  
3 mechanism containing permission instructions for the component of the product to  
4 run at the low operating level, wherein the security mechanism updates the  
5 permission instructions for the component to run at the high operating level upon  
6 the upgrade key being associated with the product.

1                   3. The method of claim 1 wherein:  
2 the product is a computer.

1                   4. The method of claim 3 wherein:  
2 the component is a central processing unit of the computer.

1                   5. The method of claim 3 wherein:



1                    17. The system of claim 16 wherein:  
2                    the enabling mechanism includes a security mechanism containing  
3 permission instructions for the component of the product to run at the low  
4 operating level, wherein the security mechanism updates the permission  
5 instructions for the component to run at the high operating level upon the upgrade  
6 key being associated with the product.

1 18. The system of claim 16 wherein:  
2 the product is a computer.

1 19. The system of claim 18 wherein:  
2 the component is a central processing unit of the computer.

1 20. The system of claim 18 wherein:  
2 the component is a hard disk of the computer.

1 21. The system of claim 18 wherein:  
2 the component is random access memory of the computer.

1 22. The system of claim 18 wherein:  
2 the component is software of the computer.

1 23. The system of claim 16 wherein:  
2 the upgrade key is a cryptographic update key.

1 24. The system of claim 16 wherein:  
2 the upgrade key is contained on a smart card.

1 25. The system of claim 16 wherein:  
2 the upgrade key is contained in data of the Internet.

1 26. A method for upgrading a user environment, wherein the user  
2 environment has a service operable to run at a low operating level and a high

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operating level, the service being set to operate at the low operating level, the method comprising:

- associating an upgrade key with the service, the upgrade key having permission instructions for the service to operate at the high operating level; and
- enabling the service to operate at the high operating level in response to the upgrade key being associated with the service in order to upgrade the service.